

framed within a balanced federal budget, we will soon be witnessing enormous VA staffing reductions, degradation of VA health care quality, the termination of needed programs, and the closure of VA hospitals. Our hopes of establishing VA outreach clinics in such communities as Aberdeen, South Dakota will be impossible without an increase in funding.

That is why Senator WELLSTONE and I are offering this amendment. The veterans community has done all the research and is acutely aware of the glaring health care needs that the VA must contend with in order to care for our nation's veterans. Our amendment would take \$1.3 billion from the non-Social Security surplus and designate it as emergency spending for veterans' health care. The funding required for this amendment represents a minute fraction of the total federal budget that we are debating here today. However, the funding we set aside to improve accessibility and quality of care within our veterans health care system will provide a tremendous boost for an already stretched and fractured VA medical system.

Mr. President, since I began my service in Congress over twelve years ago, I have held countless meetings, marched in small town Memorial Day parades, and participated in Veterans Day tributes with South Dakota's veterans. As the years go on their concerns remain the same. To ensure that Congress provides the VA with adequate funding to meet the health care needs for all veterans. Without additional funding South Dakota VA facilities will continue to face staff reductions, cutbacks in programs, and possible closing of facilities.

Too often, I have received letters from veterans who must wait up to three months to see a doctor. For many veterans who do not have any other form of health insurance, the VA is the only place they can go to receive medical attention. They were promised medical care when they completed their service and now many veterans are having to jump through hoops just to see a doctor.

It is time for Congress to end this neglect and fiscal irresponsibility when it comes to providing decent health care for veterans. I think Senator WELLSTONE would agree with me that no one in this body would accept three years of flat-lined budgets if we were talking about the Department of Defense or national security funding. But that is exactly what we've done to our veterans. Every year we labor through the appropriations process and every year veterans funding is treated as an afterthought and not one of our first priorities.

As Congress makes spending decisions for fiscal year 2000, we also will have to decide what to do with the non-Social Security surplus for next year.

Shouldn't we be able to use some of that surplus to address the immediate problems of veterans health care? I think our veterans deserve nothing less, and we should make a committed effort to give the VA all the resources it needs to operate effectively.

I want to thank my friend, Mr. WELLSTONE, for working with me on this endeavor to do what we feel is our obligation to our veterans. The veterans community is fortunate to have such a vigilant advocate in Senator WELLSTONE who has displayed tremendous passion and leadership when it comes to ensuring that our nation's commitment to our veterans is not forgotten.

As we enter the twilight of the Twentieth Century, we can look back at the immense multitude of achievements that led to the ascension of the United States of America as the preeminent nation in modern history. We owe this title as world's greatest superpower in large part to the twenty-five million men and women who served in our armed services and who defended the principles and ideals of our nation.

From the battlefields of Lexington and Concord, to the beaches of Normandy, and to the deserts of the Persian Gulf, our nation's history is replete with men and women who, during the savagery of battle, were willing to forego their own survival not only to protect the lives of their comrades, but because they believed that peace and freedom was too invaluable a right to be vanquished. Americans should never forget our veterans who served our nation with such dedication and patriotism.

Again, Mr. President, I applaud Chairman BOND and Senator MIKULSKI for recognizing the shortcomings in this VA-HUD Appropriations bill by increasing veterans' health care by an additional \$1.7 billion. Senator WELLSTONE and I believe that we can go even further, and we ask for the Senate's support. We have an obligation to provide decent, affordable, health care for America's veterans. We should live up to our obligation to our nation's veterans and ensure that they are treated with the respect and honor that they so richly deserve.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I say to my colleague from Missouri, we are now working through some colloquies. Some are a little bit more chatty and we have not had a chance to review them all. We will be prepared tomorrow to present them to the Senate.

Mr. President, I say to my colleague from Missouri, we have concluded our actions for today.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed

to a period for morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, two years ago today, on September 23, 1997, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was read for the first time and referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Unfortunately, instead of coming to the Senate floor to commend the Senate for ratifying the CTBT or for taking steps toward that end, I must come to point out the Senate has done absolutely nothing on CTBT. Not a hearing, not a vote. And I must confess up front, I do this with a sense of confusion, disappointment, and profound regret over the Republican majority's inaction on this important treaty since its submission to the Senate.

The Republican majority's unwillingness to permit the Senate to take even a single step forward on a treaty to ban all nuclear testing has me and many observers confused for a variety of reasons. First, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty has been enthusiastically and unequivocally endorsed by our senior military leaders, both current and former. In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, General Hugh Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated "the Joint Chiefs of Staff support ratification of this treaty." The current chairman and fellow service chiefs are not alone in their support for CTBT. In fact, the four previous occupants of the chairman's seat have endorsed this treaty. Former Chairmen General John Shalikashvili, General Colin Powell, Admiral William Crowe, and General David Jones issued a statement on the treaty and the additional safeguards proposed by the President. Their statement concluded "with these safeguards, we support Senate approval of the CTB treaty."

Second, several Presidents, both Republican and Democratic, have supported a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing. In fact, Presidents as far back as President Eisenhower have worked to make this prohibition a reality. On May 29, 1961, President Eisenhower said the failure to achieve a test ban "would have to be classed as the greatest disappointment of any administration, of any decade, of any party." Similar statements have been made by Presidents in every subsequent decade. And if this Congress fails to act, Presidents in the next millennium unfortunately will be uttering comparable remarks.

Third, the overwhelming majority of the American people, approximately 82 percent, have indicated they endorse immediate Senate approval of the